

THE COMMAND OMBUDSMAN'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING FAMILIES OF INDIVIDUAL AUGMENTEES

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

As of early 2009, the Navy has over 10,000 Sailors on the ground in support of Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). That includes members of regular Navy units, Health Services Augmentees (HSAs) and Individual Augmentees (IAs). IAs include mobilized Reserve Component Sailors (RC MOB) and Active Component (AC) Sailors. Navy personnel serving in IA billets are split roughly equally between AC and RC. The majority of IAs receive orders to Central Command (CENTCOM) in Iraq and Afghanistan, but other duty locations are possible. The IA process is part of the nation's overall defense strategy, and the Navy is working on processes to increase IA assignment predictability for Sailors and their families.

The purpose of this module is to:

- Familiarize new Command Ombudsmen with the impact of IA assignments on families
- Introduce them to resources established to assist IA families
- Highlight the important role Command Ombudsmen have in support of IA families

This module — a temporary training addendum to *Ombudsman Basic Training* — is approximately twenty-five minutes long and should be incorporated into *Module Eight: Mission Readiness*.

II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this training, participants will be able to:

- Identify the unique challenges of IA families
- Understand the Ombudsman's role and relationship with the Command IA Coordinator (CIAC)
- Identify at least three responsibilities of the Parent Command and Command Ombudsman
- List at least two referral resources for questions or concerns regarding a Sailor's IA assignment

III. MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

Materials and equipment needed to deliver this module include:

- Method for projecting PowerPoint presentations
- PowerPoint slides
- Copies of the IA Handbooks
- Copies of the Family Connection Newsletter

IV. OUTLINE

1. Introduction
2. IA deployment challenges
3. IA process
4. Parent Command and Ombudsmen roles and responsibilities
5. Combat Operational Stress
6. Resources
7. Summarize and conclude

V. CONTENT

1. Introduction

Slide #1 (Title Slide)

TELL participants, “The purpose of this module is to:

- Familiarize you with the impact IA assignments have on families
- Introduce you to resources established to assist IA families
- Highlight the important role you and your command have in supporting IA Sailors and their families”

ASK participants to raise their hand if:

- You have IAs from your command serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa or elsewhere
 - You are unsure whether or not you have IAs from your command
 - Your spouse is or has been an Individual Augmentee

2. IA Deployment Challenges

Slide #2

LECTURE the following content:

Individual Augmentees are Sailors with needed skills that are sent temporarily from their current command to assist, or *augment*, another command or, as a SELRES, are recalled to active duty from their civilian occupation. The Navy tries to use volunteers, but when there are no volunteers with the required skills, non-volunteers are sent. IA assignments are not new to the Navy, as the Navy has always used service members to support other commands as needed. For example, if a destroyer was getting ready to deploy and the Independent Duty Corpsman (IDC) could not get underway for some reason, then an IDC from another command would be assigned to deploy with the destroyer — generally until the assigned corpsman could meet the ship or until another corpsman was permanently assigned.

One of the twists to the concept of Sailors augmenting other commands is, as an IA, they are augmenting other branches of Service, primarily the Army and Marine Corps. Another difference is that Sailors are supporting Soldiers and Marines on the ground — outside the traditional Navy role — in Iraq or Afghanistan. Additionally, Sailors are supporting ground efforts in Africa and in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, but IA Sailors are sent anywhere they are needed in support of OCO (also referred to as the Global War on Terrorism, or GWOT).

Slide #3

Originally, IA Sailors were sent on their assignments from traditional sea or shore duty tours via Temporary Additional Duty (TAD). In recognition of the difficulties that these assignments (called Individual Augmentee Manpower Management — IAMM) sometimes caused for commands, Sailors, and their families, the Navy instituted the GSA (GWOT Support Assignment) program, which assigns Sailors to IA assignments via the detailing process at the normal rotation point at the end of a standard tour of duty. GSA Sailors get an administrative Permanent Change of Station (PCS) to Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC) for the duration of their IA assignment, while the command from which they just detached retains accountability for family support for the duration of the IA assignment. Currently both types of IA assignments, in addition to RC MOB IAs, are used to fill the Navy's IA requirements. As the Navy's role in OCO evolves, determinations will be made as to how best to meet the nation's IA manpower requirements.

NOTE: The Obama administration uses the term Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO),

which includes operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. As of this writing, we will continue to use GSA and GWOT, the Bush administration terminology, but will refer to OCO as well.

Slides #4 and #5

ASK participants, “What are some unique aspects to an IA deployment compared to a typical Navy deployment?” Responses may include:

- The Sailor does not deploy with their regular Navy unit or with any unit at all
- Training for the deployment is different
- IA Deployments are typically longer
- There are some additional family support systems
- There may be an element of danger
- There may be less fanfare at homecoming
- IA families may feel isolated and alone
- The joys and possible pitfalls of mid-tour Rest & Recuperation (R&R) leave

DISCUSS how the Command Ombudsman may be able to assist with these challenges such as:

- Staying in contact with IA families
- Providing a listening ear
- Being a source for information and suggestions about what to expect during R&R leave, homecoming, available resources, etc.

LECTURE the following information:

Slide #6

Most IA Sailors are supporting ground forces in their traditional military specialties, or core competencies ashore, such as:

- Base and port operations support
- Medical services
- Explosive Ordnance Disposal

- Mobile security forces
- Civil affairs
- Detainee operations
- Infrastructure protection

Note that most IA jobs are support positions, which reduces the level of risk for the majority of Sailors in IA billets compared to Soldiers and Marines on the front lines of combat. However, IA Sailors are in combat zones, so there is a level of risk, and some missions are riskier than others and may involve combat operations. Deployments are typically one year long, plus training. Sailors may get two weeks of R&R leave approximately halfway through their assignment, but leave is not automatic. It must be requested and approved by the chain of command (and often depends on conditions at the deployment site). Sailors must be assigned for at least 270 days 'boots on the ground' to qualify.

3. IA Process

Slide #7

TELL participants that [NAVADMIN 160/08](#), issued in July 2008, announced the assignment of U S Fleet Forces Command (USFF) as the executive agent and supported commander for IA Sailors and IA family support across the IA Continuum. USFF is dedicated to providing consistent, comprehensive support to IAs and their families throughout the entire IA process.

Ombudsmen should be familiar with the following organizations:

- United States Fleet Forces Command (USFF)
- The Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC)
- The Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC)
- Navy Mobilization Processing Sites (NMPS)
- Navy Individual Augmentee Combat Skills Training

Slide #8

USFF, as the single overarching authority for IA matters, will put predictability and stability into the IA process for our Sailors and their families. USFF Command:

- Is dedicated to providing consistent, comprehensive support to IAs and their families throughout the entire IA process

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- Issues regular IA Grams with up-to-date information pertaining to IA matters
- Has established a web site for up-to-date IA support information (www.ia.navy.mil)

Slide #9

Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC), headquartered at Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, VA, was formally established in 2006 and reports to USFF. NECC:

- Consolidates
 - Anti-terrorism force protection
 - Shore-based logistical support
 - Construction missions
- Oversees
 - Bomb disposal crews
 - Expeditionary logistics specialists
 - Mobile dive/salvage teams
 - Naval Coastal Warfare groups
 - Master-at-Arms forces
 - Navy's Riverine Force

Slide #10

The Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC)

- Reports to NECC
- Acts as administrative Parent Command for GSA IA Sailors
- Is POC for all theater-related family issues
- Moderates Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) IA information
- Makes referrals regarding services available for families

Slide #11

ECRC contact info:

- Web <http://www.ecrc.navy.mil>
- Phone 1 (877) 364-4302
- E-mail Ecrc.hq.fct@navy.mil

Slide #12

Navy Mobilization Processing Sites (NMPS) handle both active duty IAs and RC MOB IAs. The purpose of the processing site is to ensure the Sailor is ready to deploy (with RC MOB personnel also demobilizing at NMPS at the conclusion of their IA tour). Deployment briefings and reviews of medical, dental, training and personnel records are completed and the Sailor is determined to be ready to deploy. Most IA Sailors spend only a few days at NMPS.

There are two primary processing sites:

- San Diego (619) 887-8080
- Norfolk (757) 438-3375

Seabees are processed at:

- Port Hueneme (805) 982-2007
- Gulfport (228) 871-3199 * Personnel reporting to GTMO also go through Gulfport

Slide #13

The Army provides Navy Individual Augmentee Combat Skills Training (NIACT) for Sailors. Many Sailors are trained at Fort Jackson, South Carolina unless their specialty training is at another site. Training is approximately 17 days long and includes a variety of topics including:

- Convoy operations
- Weapons qualifications
- Urban operations
- Code of Conduct

- First Aid
- Cultural awareness

ASK participants the rhetorical question: “What happens when a Sailor receives orders for an IA assignment?”

Slide #14

TELL participants the Navy strives to give sixty days or more notice to enable a Sailor and their family time to adequately prepare for deployment. When possible, two Sailors will be notified for the open billet – the primary candidate and an alternate. For AC Sailors, both the command and Sailor are notified; RC MOB IAs receive mobilization orders. Once notified, the Sailor, or both Sailors if two are named, work closely with their parent command to complete a mandatory pre-deployment checklist before leaving. A copy of the checklist is available at www.ecrc.navy.mil. If the primary candidate is unable to successfully complete the pre-deployment checklist for whatever reason, the alternate will be expected to deploy within the original timeframe and needs to be prepared for that eventuality. Please NOTE: In some cases, it isn't possible to have an embedded alternate. For example, when there's an emergent requirement (a new mission), alternates are not always available on short notice. Also, with certain “high demand, low density” ratings, we sometimes run into issues where we don't want to pull people out of high-demand jobs just to send them to training when they may not be needed in theatre.

After completing the pre-deployment checklist, the Sailor must complete NKO's Individual Augmentee Prerequisite Training before proceeding to NMPS, where it is verified. RC personnel must report to their parent Navy Operational Support Center (NAVOPSPTCEN, or NOSC) for processing prior to reporting to the NMPS site.

After NMPS, most IAs then report to combat skills training (NIACT or Advanced Combat Skills). After combat skills training, Sailors may be required to attend additional job-specific training before being transported to their ultimate duty station. During transportation to their ultimate TAD assignment, IAs must carry four sea bags of gear (of which only one half of a sea bag is uniforms) to their ultimate duty station.

4. Parent Command and Ombudsman Roles and Responsibilities

Slide #15

TELL participants there are a number of ways the Parent Command can maintain the connection between IA Sailors, their families and the command. Commands:

- Will assign at least one Command IA Coordinator (CIAC) and instruct them to maintain at least monthly contact with IA Sailors via telephone or Internet and keep a record of contacts in Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS). CIACs will

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inform the CO of any issues affecting their IA Sailors/families

- May periodically acknowledge those serving in IA assignments in the command POD
- Should periodically make a telephone call or send a letter or e-mail from the Commanding Officer, Executive Officer or Command Master Chief to the IA Sailor and/or their family
- Ensure an accurate Fitness Report / Evaluation documents the member's IA contributions
- Ensure welcome home arrangements have been made when a Sailor from the command returns from an IA assignment
- Reorient IA Sailors to the command. While attendance at a full session of command indoctrination may not be necessary, a command "update" is in order
- Welcome IA Sailors back from their temporary duty during All Hands calls, in the POD, via a command newsletter, or other means

Slide #16

The Command Ombudsman should:

- Be informed of the unique aspects of IA assignments
- Maintain monthly contact with IA families unless otherwise directed by the family, via telephone, Internet or in person and document contacts in the Ombudsman Registry
- Communicate with CIAC and know who the IA Sailors are at your command
- Know your local Individual Deployment Support Specialist (IDSS)
- Inform the CO and CIAC of any concerns expressed by IA families

Slide #17

- Include IA families on any command correspondence such as newsletters, telephone trees, social rosters, etc.
- Link IA families to the ECRC publicly-accessible website: <http://www.ecrc.navy.mil>. ECRC IA Family Support's toll free line 1-(877)-364-4302 is available to help with questions regarding IA issues
- Ensure IA families are aware of the USFF IA web site (www.ia.navy.mil)

Slide #18

- Be aware of possible signs of combat operational stress and make referrals to the local Fleet and Family Support Center, Chaplain, Medical, Veterans Affairs or Military OneSource
- Inform IA families about the existence of any IA-specific resources such as in person and virtual IA discussion groups, newsletters and the IA Family Handbook available at www.ffsp.navy.mil.

5. Combat Operational Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury

Slide #19

TELL participants that homecoming can be especially challenging for Sailors returning from an IA assignment — especially those assignments that involved combat. Family members may be the first to notice their Sailor is struggling to adapt to life at home and contact you, their Command Ombudsman, for assistance. Behaviors that may be indicative of a need for assistance with adjusting to life after being in a combat zone include:

- Sleep problems (e.g., inability to go to sleep, stay asleep, sleeping too much, nightmares)
- Flashbacks or re-experiencing an event or events
- Poor work performance
- Withdrawal/inability to connect socially
- Avoiding situations that remind the IA of a traumatic event, including avoiding crowds and loud noises
- “Self-medicating” with alcohol or drugs
- Angry outbursts
- Tearfulness/sadness

Specialized training is not required to recognize when an individual is under stress and needs assistance. Help is available to Sailors and their families. Contact:

- Medical at the command or on base
- Fleet and Family Support Center
- Chaplain

- Military OneSource
- Department of Veterans Affairs

Slide #20

Much media attention has surrounded the issues of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) with service members returning from duty in a combat zone. Sailors serve in support roles with Army and Marine Corps units; therefore, while they are less likely to return with either diagnosis, it is helpful for family members to be informed of symptoms and referral sources.

The terms “Post Traumatic Stress” and “Combat and Operational Stress” are often used interchangeably. Clarify that Post Traumatic Stress is a psychological diagnosis and since most Sailors serve in supportive roles, the term Operational Stress is more appropriate than Combat Stress.

6. Resources

Slide #21

TELL ombudsmen that there are many resources available that provide up-to-date information regarding the ombudsman's role in the support of IA spouses and family members. They should be encouraged to review these resources and become familiar with them.

- OPNAVINST 1750.1F
- FFSP Web site at www.ffsp.navy.mil
- U.S. Fleet Forces Command Web site at www.ia.navy.mil
- IA Gram #3: Parent Command assignment and responsibilities for IA Sailors and their Families
- IA Gram #4: Roles and Responsibilities of Parent Commands, Navy Operational Support Centers (NOSCs) and Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC) for IA Sailors and Their Families
- Future IA Grams pertaining to family support resources and ombudsman responsibilities will be posted on the USFF Web site at www.ia.navy.mil
- Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) at www.nko.navy.mil
- ECRC Web site at www.ecrc.navy.mil provides the official IA checklist and a wealth of

information to answer questions about the IA process

7. Summarize and Conclude

TELL participants, “In summary, it is important for you to stay connected with your command IA families to ensure they feel they are still part of the Navy family.

Fleet and Family Support Centers have staff members identified as IA POCs. Staff members are trained to understand the IA process, provide IA specific pre-, mid-, and post-deployment information and act as a “safety net” for those IA families whose commands are not maintaining contact as they should. Contact your local FFSC, learn who your FFSC IA POC is, and work closely with them.”

VI. POWERPOINT SLIDES

VII. HANDOUTS

Recommended handouts for use with this module include:

- Ten Tips for a Happy R&R Leave
- IA Family, Sailor and Command Handbooks
- Family Connection Newsletter (IA Family Newsletter)

Ten Tips for a Happy R&R Leave

1. Agree upon R&R leave plans in advance of the leave period. Discuss plans via phone, letters and e-mails. Some families choose to spend their time together as if they were on vacation. Others go about their daily lives, work and school commitments.
2. Compromise as necessary. Your Sailor will likely be tired from the long trip home. You may be eager to go out. Try not to over-schedule. The structure and strict routine of deployment can leave your Sailor craving unscheduled time and hoping for relief from constant responsibilities.
3. Stay flexible. Make plans and then make back-up plans. Changing schedules can mean a delay in return. Leave starts once the Sailor arrives at the airport nearest home.
4. Set aside time to spend alone with just your partner. Of course children will be eager to spend time with their parent, and their needs should be accommodated as much as possible. However, your relationship with your Sailor is your family's foundation. Your children need you to have a strong foundation.
5. Expect sex to be a bit awkward. You both will probably feel a bit anxious about engaging in sex initially. It might be the fact that you haven't been naked in front of someone for quite a while. This is especially true for someone who is pregnant or has recently given birth. Take it slow. Remember, practice makes perfect!
6. Offer to drive. Your Sailor may be used to avoiding roadside debris by driving down the middle of the road!
7. Set aside time for friends and extended family. Many have found it is helpful to host a cookout or other social event. Invite everyone and then the rest of R&R leave is available for your immediate family.
8. Your Sailor may need to rest both physically and emotionally. It's probably best not to expect them to share every detail of their experience with you during the course of two weeks. Let them open up the best that they can and realize that may not be much.
9. Keep in mind your Sailor must return to the IA zone. It's especially important for children to be aware that daddy/mommy is just coming home for a visit.
10. Have some fun. Enjoy being together. Create family memories that will last long after this deployment.